

Board of Trustees Report to the General Assembly

2016

It is with great humility that I report to you on behalf of the Board of Trustees or our UUA. The past year has been one of rebirth and growth, as the Board and the Administration have evolved into a relationship that is blessed with covenant, collaboration, and commitment. Last year's Board report reflected the growing pains of a smaller board and the ongoing implementation of policy governance, and while this past year has not been without its challenges, the Board is hitting its stride with clarity and purpose.

As cultural and political issues take deep root, our Board adapts quickly to the changing needs within society and within our faith movement.

Our Inclusion and Empowerment working group assures that we keep our ears to the ground on issues that intersect with our values. In the October, 2015 Board retreat, we welcomed Jacqui Lewis and John Janke from the Middle Project in New York who led us into a heartfelt and promising conversation about our commitment to Black Lives Matter. We began to consider how the UUA and its member congregations might strengthen and expand our commitment to Black Lives Matter. We also recalled and discussed our experience of the GA general session at which the Black Lives Matter resolution was considered. The Board regrets that the process in place, the limited time, and the racism we're still working to root out enflamed debate and brought out the worst in many of us. People were hurt. Lines were drawn in the sand. Old wounds were opened. We know this work is full of heartbreak. And we must find the will and the way to do a better job. As part of that extended conversation, we welcomed thirty high school youth and their advisors from the Twin Cities. We broke into small groups and returned to the Black Lives Matter conversation. It was a profound moment of "linkage" as together we tried to figure out how to improve the likelihood of creativity, respect and transformation. At the April meeting we engaged one another in intimate and inspiring conversations about prejudice against the trans

community and what is required of us in response to the anti-trans legislation being proposed across the United States.

We are working hard to amplify generosity and stewardship, both through our traditional channels, and through generative work in collaboration with the Staff. And the Board seeks to model and encourage generosity. Our support for the Friends of the UUA and our involvement in encouraging financial support of the Association is central to our obligations and commitments as Trustees. Moderator Jim Key, as part of our effort to expand the circle of those able to come to General Assembly, established a scholarship fund that has enabled 87 people to attend GA this year who would not have otherwise been able to be here. We are in close collaboration with Stewardship and Development on the Annual Program Fund and on a Task Force that has been convened to consider how best to strengthen our core fund-raising efforts by examining our current contribution guidelines based on membership. And we are supporting, with great enthusiasm, the development of the Generosity Network, to help build relationships with congregations to help them be more generous with the UUA. In January of this year, the Board authorized a Board-restricted “Innovation Fund” that sets aside unrestricted bequests to provide the administration funds for new and creative initiatives. In other important votes this year, we helped assure the maintenance of 24 Farnsworth by setting aside the cash needed to fund depreciation on the building,

The Board received a report from the Audit Committee on their Enterprise Risk Management strategy that helps us mitigate the danger of unforeseen threats, and we welcomed an overview of UUA staff compensation showing that our lowest paid workers are paid above market with a \$15 an hour minimum wage. We still have opportunities to make salaries more market-competitive, reflecting Unitarian Universalism's commitment to economic justice. Equally as important, the Board received and approved a balanced budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The presentation tied the proposed expenditures to the stated Ends of the Association making it easier for trustees to understand the intended impacts of our spending. We took a look at the budget through a racial justice lens and are convinced that the UUA is making solid progress toward becoming a credible

partner in the work. We also discussed projected income and are cautiously optimistic that the income goals are attainable.

We are working in a variety of ways to strengthen Unitarian Universalism's capacity to make and keep important promises. The Board Task Force on Reimagining Governance is working on ways to encourage greater participation in the conversations, which shape and strengthen our faith. The Moderator has convened a team, led by Rev. Dr. Susan Ritchie, to consider how we might broaden our understanding of membership in ways that lead us into covenant. The Board was pleased to learn that one of our new covenanting communities, the UU Cooperative Communities which created the Lucy Stone Cooperative, and the new Margaret Moseley Cooperative, received a \$100,000 grant from "The Forbes Under 30 \$1M Change the World Competition." The Socially Responsible Investing Committee has also invested \$50,000 in the effort whose mission is "to create cooperative housing based in UU principles and purposes."

And the Board has approved a policy calendar, developed and administered by the Governance Working Group, requiring that we annually consider the adequacy of the global ends of the Association in order to determine when it would be best to engage our member congregations and communities in a process to reconsider and renew the Ends that govern our efforts. The Board continues to monitor itself and our policies at each quarterly meeting, in keeping with our commitment to a strong, accountable partnership with all of our stakeholders.

The Congregational Boundaries Working Group continues to partner with the Office of Ministries and Faith Development to honor the Association's pledge to hold all of us accountable to "values at our core" in addressing issues of clergy sexual misconduct. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee is committed to ongoing training on this topic, and the Board will also be trained during the next year to better understand the deep implications of misconduct. We are deeply grateful to all of those who have come forward with their stories, and to those who have helped and continue to help mend the system.

There are three declared candidates for UUA President, all of whom have completed the certification process. Rev. Susan Frederick Gray, Rev. Alison Miller and Rev. Jeanne Pupke represent our current slate of candidates, but other nominees are eligible to enter the race up until February 1, 2017. Board members and senior staff gathered with the three candidates recently to share our hopes and dreams for the future of Unitarian Universalism. We also reviewed the oversight structure in place for UUA elections and decided to take a more active role than in past elections by hosting five candidate forums prior to the election to be held in June of 2017. We have learned much from the nomination process of the first election of a single, 6-year term president that will offer important guidance for future elections. And, as if that isn't enough, we have begun to plan for the creation of a Moderator Search Committee by charging the Appointments Committee to begin to assemble the team and by specifying the attributes needed.

President Morales and his leadership team presented a thorough and carefully conceived report evaluating the Association's progress in pursuit of our stated Ends. The Board enthusiastically entered into deep and fruitful conversation with staff as to the implications of their conclusions and the need to find more effective ways to measure the impact of our efforts. It was generally agreed that staff is developing strong evaluative skills and that more baseline information is needed in order to track our progress over time. It is difficult to measure the impact of the Association's efforts in congregational and community life but the Board and Administration are committed to the effort. With deep appreciation and regret we received the resignation of Vice Moderator, Susan Weaver, and enthusiastically expressed our appreciation for her excellent work in behalf our Unitarian Universalism. We also said goodbye to The Rev. Terasa Cooley, UUA Program and Strategy Officer, who stepped down after many years of dedicated service. Our best wishes follow these two outstanding individuals who have been so important to us.

In summary, our progress has been nothing short of remarkable. The year has been marked by a hard-won clarity of purpose and a genuine sense of collaboration between the Board and the Administration. Our Communications

Working Group has made every effort to ensure that transparency provides full insight and awareness into the work of the Association, which is no small task! We have deep appreciation for all of those with whom we have partnered and those who have offered feedback and support throughout the year. There is much work ahead, but the energy and spirit with which we face the work will carry us well into the future.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise". The script is cursive and fluid, with a small dot above the 'i'.

Denise M. Rimes
Vice Moderator